Nov 2022

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THE LIONS' PRIDE
MEDIA GROUP

Perfect timing for 'All in the Timing': Saint Leo theatre students present one-act comedies

Satyne Doner
Arts & Culture Editor

The lights were dimmed, the audience hushed, and the first Saint Leo University theatre student stepped out onto the Black Box stage for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. This was for "All in the Timing," a series of one-act comedies that took place every evening on University Campus from Nov. 4 to Nov. 6.

"All in the Timing" is a 6-act comedic performance originally written by David Ives, and Saint Leo's theatre department brilliantly presented it to the community in a way that was both entertaining and inspiring.

Emily Kochanski oversaw the sound design for the production and was a stage manager as well. She is a former Saint Leo student who studied theatre and is now a Simulation Specialist for the University in the Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence. In her time as a student at Saint Leo, she performed in several productions, and has moved onto more behind-the-scenes roles.

"It felt very natural returning to the Black Box," said Kochanski. "I would say the overall energy [for the show] was a nervous excitement. I think all the actors, both new and seasoned, felt a lot of pressure. […] They all felt compelled to make the show an unforgettable one; to rekindle that magic that had been lost."

The show was certainly unforgettable. Students, families, and faculty all came together inside the Black Box to watch the magic happen on stage; the performers seemed to have an inextinguishable excitement about them, and the air was electric.

"COVID has kept me out of the theatre world for so long that stepping back into that space, that world, felt very refreshing," said Kochanski. "It felt like coming home."

Kristian Hargrove, a senior studying theatre and another stage manager on the production, had similar sentiments.

"We were able to showcase our Black Box to students and the community again, which is an amazing feeling. Both cast and crew were curious to see how this production could be a new challenge and how the outcome of the production would be received by the public," she said.

The theatre department is looking forward to hosting more shows inside of the Black Box. Both Hargrove and Kochanski expressed that there are productions in the works for spring 2023.

"We are currently organizing ideas for the Spring production," said Hargrove. "When auditions open, everyone will have a chance to audition and showcase their talent!"

While the ideas are still up in the air, Spring productions are still a go.

"Ideas are already being tossed around for our Spring musical. The magic will only grow from there," said Kochanski.

To wrap things up, it seems that "All in the Timing" went smoothly from the get-go, and members of Saint Leo's theatre community were chomping at the bit to get back onto the Black Box stage again.

Hargrove left her heart out on the stage last weekend and had one last comment for those who are supportive of the theatre community.

"I hope that audience members take away an important message of how time is important and valuable," said Hargrove. "Each act is connected one way or another, and all showcase time in a different aspect. Sure, the show was funny, but each act has a deeper meaning. It is all in the timing!"

Photo courtesy of @stleotheatre on Instagram

Saint Leo theatre students rehearsed in the Black Box theater for the first time since COVID-19.

Newsroom

The Lions' Pride Media Group is the student-run publication of Saint Leo University, free from institutional interference from conception to print. We publish in print once monthly, and weekly online at our website and through our social media sites. It is the mission of The Lions' Pride Media Group to provide accurate news and diverse opinions that are important to the Saint Leo community, and our goal is to inform and entertain readers while providing thought-provoking journalism without fear of reprisal.
We are located in the Student Activities Building in Office 106.

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Co-founder of Saint Leo University's Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies receives Papal Knighthood

Alora Peters
Editor-in-Chief

It is not often that a university gets to host an historical event of both international and interreligious significance. However, with the recent Papal Knighthood investiture of Rabbi A. James Rudin, Saint Leo University got to do exactly that.

Rudin, who is a co-founder of Saint Leo's Center for Catholic-Jewish Studies (CCJS), has worked extensively and passionately towards promoting interreligious dialogue and understanding across the globe, particularly between Jews and Christians. He has served for over 30 years as a member of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and currently serves as their senior interreligious advisor.

"Rabbi Rudin... is an interreligious leader among the Jewish people," said Dr. Matthew Tapie, the director of the CCJS. "He's really built a bridge between Catholics and Jews and taught Catholics to try to understand Jewish people before they make a decision about what Judaism is."

In recognition of Rudin's international contributions to Catholic-Jewish dialogue, Pope Francis selected Rudin to receive the Papal Knighthood of the Order of St. Gregory the Great.

"Papal Knighthood is a very ancient honor, it's something that kind of hearkens back to the Middle Ages," said Tapie. "The Church bestows the Knighthood on someone when they make a major contribution to society or to the Church, but it's really rare for someone from another faith to get that honor."

Rudin is the third rabbi in history to be recognized with this honor, and is the first rabbi to be given the Knighthood during the papacy of Pope Francis. The global importance and historical uniqueness of Rudin's Knighthood cannot be made an understatement.

Rabbi A. James Rudin recently published his memoir, titled "The People in the Room: Rabbis, Nuns, Pastors, Popes, and Presidents," which details his extensive travels and his interactions with global and religious leaders.

"This is the universal church. This is not local, this is the Pope giving the highest honor, not only to a non-Catholic, but the highest honor for a lay Catholic," said Bishop Mark O'Connell, the auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Boston, who represented the Pope in the conferral of the Knighthood upon Rudin. "It's a great honor on my part to be able to represent Pope Francis and to meet Rabbi Rudin, to see the enormous work that he has begun, to see his passion to keep it going."

The event began with a brunch reception in the Wellness Center at University Campus for the many distinguished guests.

Following the brunch, leaders from the Saint Leo community introduced the event and welcomed visitors to the university. Dr. Edward Dadez, the university president, Sister Roberta Bailey, the Prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of Florida at Holy Name Monastery, and Abbot Isaac Camacho, of the Benedictine monks of Saint Leo Abbey, all gave remarks.

Tapie and Rabbi David Maayan, the assistant director of the CCJS, also presented on the ongoing mission of the CCJS to foster interreligious dialogue among Catholics, Jews, and other faiths.

"The challenge of this work is its greatest promise," said Maayan.

Following the introductory presentations, Rudin was officially inducted into the Papal Knighthood of the Order of St. Gregory the Great.

"To be selected for Papal Knighthood is a highlight of both my professional and personal life," said Rudin.

Following the induction, Rudin delivered a speech titled, "All Real Living is Meeting," referencing Jewish philosopher Martin Buber's definition of interreligious dialogue.

In his speech, Rudin emphasized that the effort to strengthen Catholic-Jewish relations is far from over, and now, with a recent rise in anti-Semitic attacks, it is more important than ever for the two religions to work together.

Rudin also stressed that the most important part of interreligious dialogue is in the "personally lived experiences" and "the encounters in daily life" that help to foster understanding and community among different religions.

Rudin's induction to the Knighthood is a reminder that different religions do have much to learn from each other.

"I think it's very important to lift up…dedicated examples, good examples of…friends of ours who aren't Catholic, who are helping us to be better Catholics," said Fr. David Michael, who delivered the closing remarks of the ceremony.

The conferral of the Knighthood marks not only a momentous occasion and honor for Rudin, but for the CCJS as well.

"It's exhilarating. Jim [Rudin]…established the Center almost 25 years ago. We feel like we're standing on the shoulders of giants," said Tapie. "That's one of the nice things about these religious traditions, is that you learn that you are working and are able to live and thrive because of the sacrifice of a lot of the people who came before you. That's what this day is about."

The conferral of the Knighthood was originally intended to take place in Boston; however, due to seasonal scheduling conflicts, an alternative location needed to be found.

"I proposed that we have it down here, in Florida, and that's how we connected with the CCJS," said Michael. "I think it was the right move because this community is really [Rudin's] community."

This change in plans allowed Saint Leo the opportunity to become involved in the planning and hosting of the event.

"[This is] amazing, to say the least, because we are the only university doing this, not only today, but most likely for this year and the years to come," said Fr. Lucius Amarillas, the prior of Saint Leo Abbey. "This is history in the making. It's a very beautiful thing to be a part of."

The Knighthood Ceremony was the culmination of hard work and dedication of many staff and faculty at Saint Leo.

"Making the event come together has been a real team effort," said Tapie. "All different departments from Saint Leo have really chipped in to help."

The CCJS plans to continue hosting events to foster interreligious dialogue and learning, with their next planned event, "Why Dialogue Matters," scheduled for December 8. Those who are interested in learning more about the CCJS and its mission should contact Tapie at matthew.tapie@saintleo.edu, follow the CCJS on social media @ccjs_slu, or stop by the CCJS office on the second floor of Saint Francis Hall.

Taylor Swift's 'Midnights' album is here, and already breaking records

Sophia Sullivan
Editorials Editor

Alarms were set for 12 a.m. Pajama parties were held. Social media was raging. Singer-songwriter Taylor Swift watched as the affectionately coined "Swifties" lost their minds over her brand-new tenth studio album, "Midnights." Millions enthusiastically canceled their plans on Oct. 21, 2022, to listen to "Midnights" at, you guessed it, midnight.

"Midnights," a pop concept album, consists of thirteen main tracks (Swift's signature number) and a surprise seven additional tracks. Ranging from energetic, upbeat tracks like "Bejeweled," to somber, heart-wrenching songs such as "Bigger Than the Whole Sky," there is something on the album for everyone to enjoy.

Through a mixture of story-telling and personal narratives, Swift paints a picture of lonely, candid, tiring nights where words and music were her lifelines. She speaks of love, revenge, and loss in her typical poetic lyrics. On the Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon, Swift spoke about her songwriting experience.

"I love writing because there's a part of it that I don't quite understand how it comes to fruition," she states. "But I found the more I write, the more I keep writing."

Swift even invited some of her friends to work with her on "Midnights," such as the esteemed singer-songwriter Lana Del Rey, actor and drummer Dylan O'Brian, and her main musical collaborator Jack Antonoff.

"I love to make things with my friends. I think the experience of making something is just as important as how proud of it you are at the end," stated Swift in her interview with Jimmy Fallon.

Saint Leo University had no shortage of students awaiting the new album. Amy Stassio, a sophomore majoring in English, gave her opinion on "Midnights."

"My favorite song on 'Midnights' is 'Bejeweled' because it's upbeat and fun but also has an impactful message about reclaiming your confidence and power after putting someone else first for too long." says Stassio.

Chloe Doherty, a freshman majoring in forensic science, had qualms about some of Swift's language, but nonetheless still enjoyed the album.

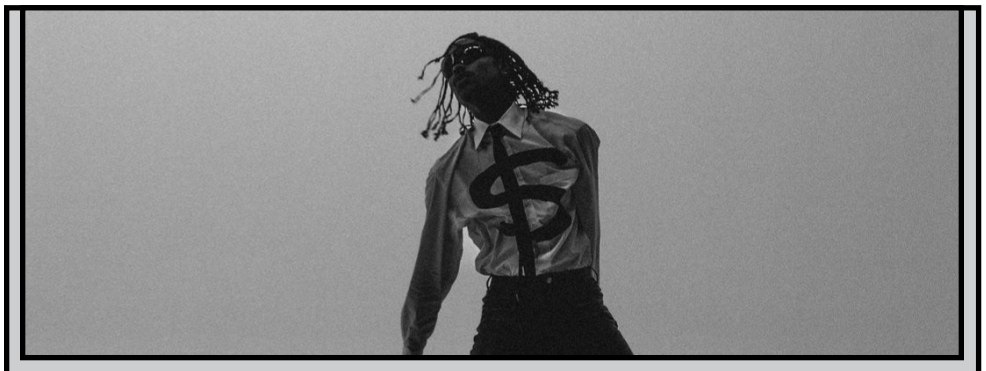
"I thought it was good with very descriptive lyrics, but some of the lyrics were sort of strange." says Doherty.

Although "Midnights" contains some darker themes, Swift felt the songwriting process contradicted that.

"This is a pretty dark album, but I'd say I had more fun making it than any album I've ever made," she said on the Tonight Show. "I don't think that art and suffering have to be holding hands all the time."

Once again taking the world by storm, Swift stunned her fans and left them in a haze with a relatable, beautifully written album. It has already broken the record for the largest album ever released in Spatial Audio on Apple Music.

"Life can be dark, starry, cloudy, terrifying, electrifying, hot, cold, romantic, or lonely," Swift writes on her Instagram account. "Just like 'Midnights.'"



Steve Lacy's 'Gemini Rights': TikTok phenomenon turned international superstar

Jacob Onken
Contributing Writer

Alternative R&B artist Steve Lacy came out with his newest album "Gemini Rights" in July of this year, but it's still a staple in many listeners' playlists. "Gemini Rights" deals with the duality of his personality and includes some of the biggest hits from last summer.

Part of the reason this album became so popular is because of the social media app TikTok. Users of the app would implement Lacy's songs in their videos, and the catchy lyrics and beats just took off.

However, just because some of the songs got popular from TikTok doesn't mean that "Gemini Rights" can't stand up on its own in the music industry and on R&B charts. The album has huge hits on it like "Bad Habits" and "Mercury." The album also has a wonderful deep cut in "Give You the World."

"Bad Habits" is easily the most popular song that Lacy has ever released. It goes through multiple progressions and has the stickiest hook on the whole album. The repetition of the lyrics "I wish I knew you wanted me" and "I bite my tongue it's a bad habit" will get stuck in any listeners ears.

The song starts off with Lacy's voice sounding raspy before the beat drops in. Drums kick in and are backed up by some subtle synths. The beat also includes a guitar with a little reverb on it and a horn. It's easily the most identifiable song on the album and continues to be a huge hit even in October.

Moreover, the song "Mercury" has a completely different vibe than the playful "Bad Habits." The track has a Hispanic flair to it and includes cowbells, tambourines, and another acoustic guitar. It also deals with some mental health issues that Lacy's gone through. This is shown with lyrics like "Oh I know myself my sins. Dug my pit then I fell in" and "Don't regret the boys I chose but do regret the mess I made."

The song goes through a lull in the middle where the autotune on Lacy's voice doesn't quite match the vibe, but other than that the song is almost perfect. It is just as easy to dance to this song as any of the others on the album.

"Give You the World" is the closing track on "Gemini Rights." The way that Lacy sings in this song sounds like it could have been inspired by Smokey Robinson, a famous soul and R&B singer. The beat is a lot simpler and has a relatively slow bass line that strums through the whole song. It has a synth that twinkles in and out of the track. Although the lyrics talk about the aftermath of a breakup, they aren't angry, they're more bittersweet.

In Lacy's young career, this is his best album yet. He ties the two faces of a Gemini to the two sides of his personality. He both wants love in a relationship and doesn't want to commit at the same time, something that is relatable to many.

Lacy showed off his production skills and his song writing ability with this album, which is incredible for such a young and rising artist. If Lacy keeps improving, he will continue to become one of the biggest players in the alternative R&B realm.

Photo via @steve.lacy

Season of gratitude at Saint Leo University

Emily Dominguez
Contributing Writer

For many across the nation, Thanksgiving is the one time of year for friends and family to pause, set aside life's everyday problems, distractions, and intrusions. It also gives people a chance to gather with family and friends, as well as reflect on what truly matters while enjoying a great meal.

Expressing and feeling gratitude is essential to life. Gratitude helps people feel more positively about life, relish in good experiences, improve their health, deal with adversity, and build strong relationships.

Saint Leo University students shared what they felt grateful for this year.

"[I'm grateful] to have built a loving and supportive group of friends and family that I can spend thanksgiving with," said Megan Rowe, senior majoring in social work.

Rafael Soto, a senior majoring in political science, stated he's thankful for his "family, girlfriend, and friends that are always so supportive of my goals." He continued, "I'm so thankful for my education and the many opportunities I've had at Saint Leo."

"I'm grateful for God's faithfulness in my life and those around me. This year has been an unexpected one, but till this day, I can say I am blessed and have seen God work in signs and miracles," political science senior Joana Cano said. "I have a family who supports me, friends who bring me closer to God and help me grow, and I'm learning every day to be less like myself and more like Jesus. There have been difficult times this year, but even through those moments, there is a reason why everything happens."

Furthermore, Haizel Resendiz, student government union (SGU) senator and sophomore psychology major, stated that she's grateful for "life, my family, friends, good health, a place to live, food, being able to work 20 hours for work-study, and all the good and bad in life because it has helped shaped me in who I am."

"I'm grateful for all the fantastic friends I've made at Saint Leo," says Natalia Dixon, a sophomore majoring in psychology.

"I'm grateful for all the incredible friendships I've made this year! I'm surrounded by many amazing people who bring out the best in me, and I couldn't be happier!" said Alicia Luecke, a junior studying marketing.

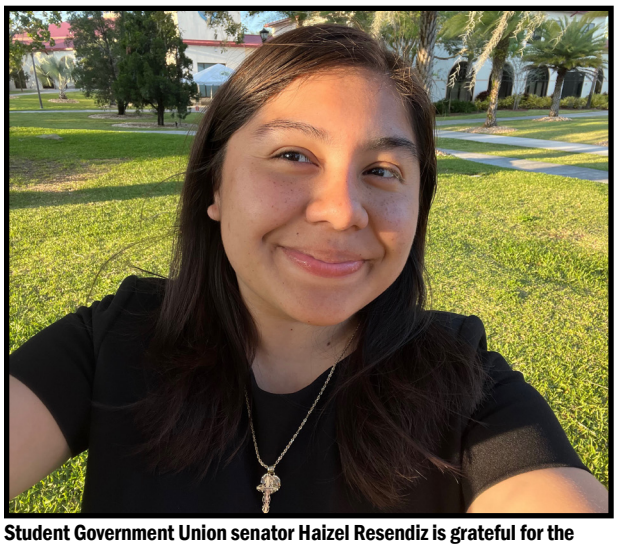
Luecke's twin sister, Emily, shared that she's grateful for the "amazing group of friends I've made here at Saint Leo." She said this is her first semester here as a junior majoring in digital communication; therefore she was "so nervous about getting my footing at a new college. But the people I've met here were incredibly welcoming to me, and I couldn't be more grateful for that."

Let us all reflect and be thankful for all we have, it helps us to not take the little things for granted. At Saint Leo, students expressed that they're grateful for what matters most: friends, family, opportunity, and God.

Social work senior Megan Rowe is grateful for her supportive community.

Senior Joanna Cano is grateful for God for the amazing year she had.

Psychology sophomore Natalia Dixon is grateful for all of her friends at Saint Leo.



Student Government Union senator Haizel Resendiz is grateful for the opportunities to work hard for something she loves.

Junior Alicia Luecke is grateful for the community she's built at Saint Leo.

Junior Emily Luecke, Alicia's sister, was nervous about transferring to Saint Leo, but is grateful for how welcoming everyone was.

Big wins and even bigger goals for Saint Leo's Sporting Clays Team

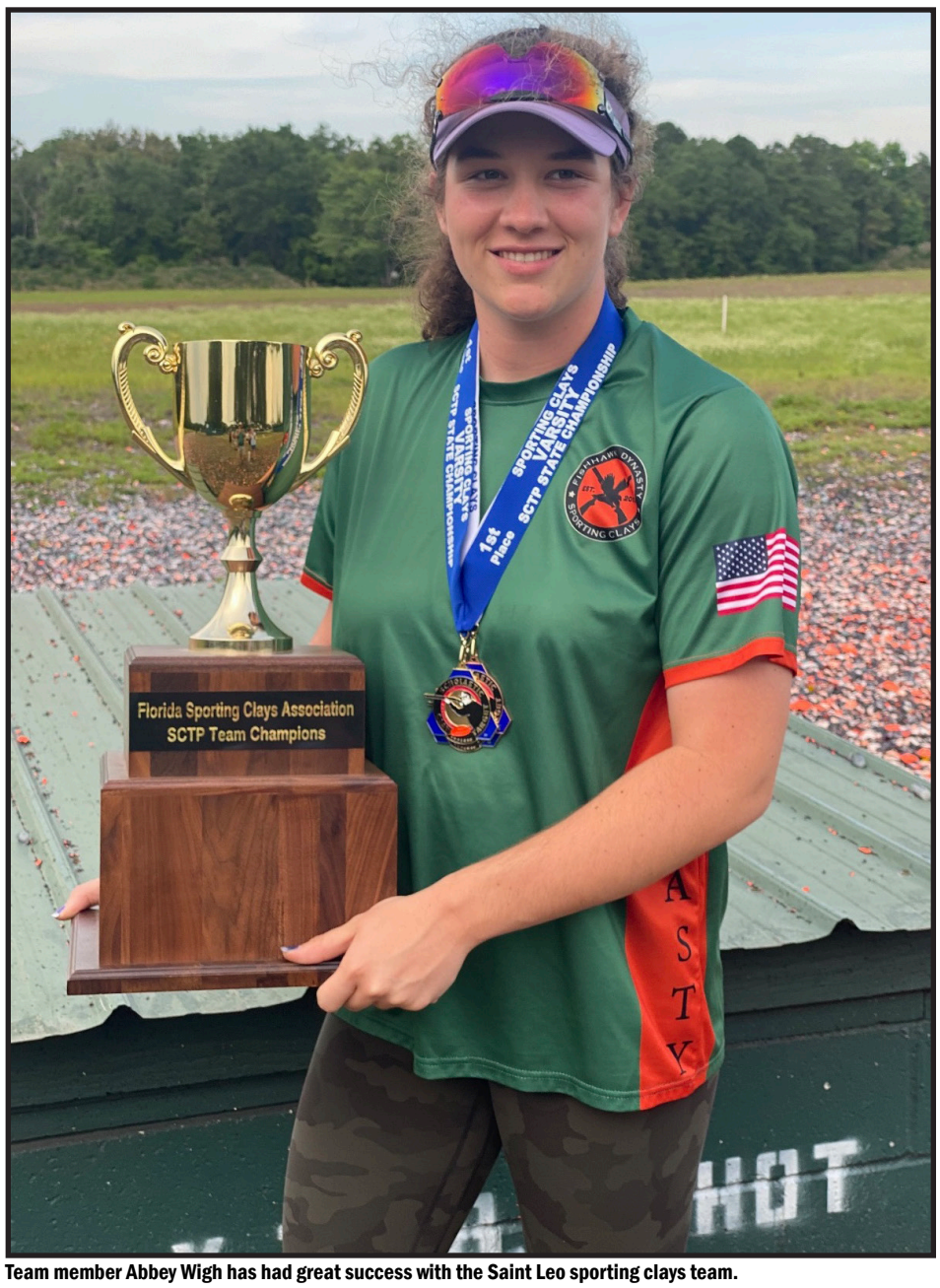
Satyne Doner
Arts & Culture Editor

"One of our main goals is actually to send a Saint Leo student to the Olympics," says Scott Schludt, assistant coach of the Saint Leo sporting clays team. As a recent business graduate from Saint Leo University, Schludt received the prestigious award of Outstanding Representation of the Benedict of Excellence 2021-2022.

While the Olympics is certainly a daunting goal, Schludt is confident that his sporting clays team will make it happen.

"We have a lot of potential that needs to be out there," says Schludt, and he might be onto something.On Oct. 6, the team left for the 2022 ACUI & SCTP International National Championship in Ohio and came home victorious. Schludt took 1st place in the men's division, and fellow teammate Abbey Wigh took 2nd in the women's division. Abbey is currently on the USA team, and with Olympic trials being this year, they have big goals in their sights.

According to the National Sporting Clays Association, sporting clays is often referred to as "golf with a shotgun." Clay targets are thrown into the air, and the shooter must shoot them down. Sporting clays is played usually in a group of two to six people, with shooting stations laid out on a course outside (usually on a large plot of land). The objective is to accurately shoot the most clays!



Team member Abbey Wigh has had great success with the Saint Leo sporting clays team.

The sport has become a staple in Florida, with different groups like Tampa Bay Sporting Clays and FishHawk Sporting Clays becoming extremely popular in the Tampa area alone. Being the serious competitor that he is, Scott Schludt wanted to expand the sport to the Saint Leo community in the form of a team.

However, the team is still relatively in its infancy and is always looking for new members. While the team was founded in 2019 by Schludt, it was not until November 2021 that the team really started to kick off. For Schludt, starting the Sporting Clays team was always more than just a hobby.

"It was just one of those things that just happened, and I just took off with it," says Schludt. "Now it's kind of like my 'kid'. The way I look at it, I have a responsibility for the people on the team. If they fail, I fail."

The team is funded by the Division of Student Affairs, and for members, mostly everything is free. The only thing that students can expect to pay for themselves is the gun and little items like glasses- but vests, practices, food, travel, and tournament fees are all paid for. When searching for the right equipment, Schludt and head coach Mike D'Ambrosio will guide students every step of the way.

Speaking of Mike D'Ambrosio, any student interested in joining the Sporting Clays Team is encouraged to stop by the Student Activities Building on campus. As the Director of University Safety, his office is located directly inside, and he is always open to chat.

As of right now, the team's home range is located off-campus at the Tampa Bay Sporting Clays in Land O' Lakes, FL. They are working towards holding practices three days a week, with Fridays being the most important for meeting up with coaches and practicing.

One thing that Scott Schludt could not stress enough is the opportunities that sporting clay has brought into his life. He has met new friends from all over the United States, senators, and governors, just to name a few.

"There is ample opportunity for anybody that joins," he says. "You meet a lot of different people."

To conclude, the Saint Leo sporting clays team has proved themselves to be quite the trailblazers within the sport. They are setting their sights high on the Olympics and continue to compete year-round across the United States with a slew of talented shooters. The team is still new and growing but has an incredible wealth of untapped potential. For any additional inquiries, students can message Scott Schludt through his email: scott.schludt@saintleo.edu.

Photos courtesy of Scott Schuldt.

Team member Abbey Wigh has had great success with the Saint Leo sporting clays team.

For the love of the ice: Saint Leo's new Hockey Club

Photo via @saintleoclubhockey

President Jack Prieto (pictured) spent all summer preparing to kick off the Saint Leo Hockey Club and is enthusiastic about the future potential of the team.

Satyne Doner
Arts & Culture Editor

For such a sunny, tropical city, Tampa Bay certainly has a large following of ice hockey fans. The Tampa Bay Lightning won back-to-back during the Stanley Cup Championships in 2020 and 2021, and you would be hard-pressed to find a car in this city without the signature lightning bolt decal on the back.

Similarly, students at Saint Leo University who are fans of hockey are invited to join the Hockey Club. No experience is necessary—the club is for those who have experience playing, those who would like to gain experience, and those who just simply love the sport!

So far, the club's biggest success has been getting up and running.

"It's been a lot of work to get the club founded, get equipment, recruit players, and start playing in our league," said Dr. Randall Woodard, the department chair of philosophy, theology, and religious studies at Saint Leo. "Our club president Jack has been an outstanding leader in respect to all this work. Making all of this happen over the summer, leading to us playing this fall, has been wonderful."

The club includes not only students at Saint Leo University but faculty as well.

"We have two staff members on the team: goalie Kevin Floyd from University Ministry and me in the theology department," said Woodard. Woodard plays defense on the hockey team, and University Ministry's Office Manager, Floyd, is the goalie.

"Presently, we are a club sport," said Floyd when asked if the team was counted as an NCAA sport. "While several collegiate ice hockey clubs are very competitive with their NCAA counterparts, they are not in the same group."

According to EngageLeo, the club will play at the Advent Health Centre Ice in the C League for their first year as a team. The club has big goals—the biggest being joining the College Hockey Federation (CHF), an organization that includes other universities and leagues.

Considering the team is still in its infancy, they have had a great start so far, hitting a deadlock tie in their first game ever on September 11 and winning their second game 10-9 on September 19. This was their first-ever win as a team in the club's history, and they hope to continue their streak.

Currently, the team does not practice outside of classroom sessions. However, the team is working towards finding an official home for Saint Leo's Hockey Club. They are going through negotiations with the new Nest Hockey Academy in San Antonio, but nothing has been set in stone. They are hopeful for the future!

Furthermore, while the club has certainly picked up a roster of several hockey lovers and talented players alike, they are always looking for more members. Interested students should contact the President of Hockey Operations, Jack Prieto, at jack.prieto@saintleo.edu. They are also encouraged to reach out to the club advisor, Woodard, at randall.woodard@saintleo.edu.

The future is already looking bright for the Saint Leo Hockey Club, and it is just getting started. In the few short months since the club has been established, it has already gotten the attention of many and has gained valuable players from all over North America. Again, the club is open to anybody who has a love for hockey, and they are encouraged to reach out and join!

Photo Courtesy of Jack Prieto

The team's goal is to attract prospective students to attend and play for Saint Leo University.

ONE SEMES

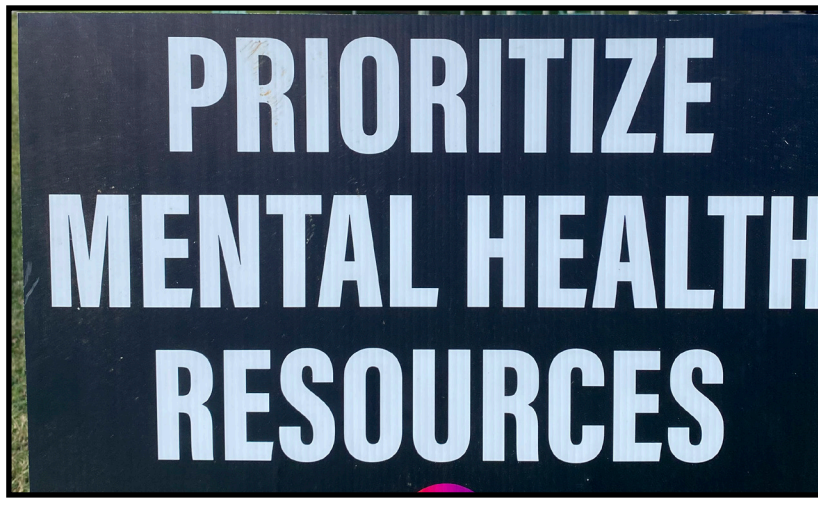
The Lions' Pride Media Group Alumni Reunion: On October 22, alumni of The Lions' Pride Media Group gathered for a reunion during this year's Homecoming weekend and Lions' Rally Festival. Pictured here are the past three Editors-in-Chief: John Hall (2019-2020), Haley Robinson (2020-2021), and Alora Peters (2021-2023).

Alumni Basketball Game: During the Fall Festival and Homecoming Celebrations, the Alumni basketball players returned to Saint Leo once again to compete with the current Lions. Spectators cheered as the players had fun on the court.

Welcome Back Bash: On September 2, the Campus Activities Board and the Student Government Union organized an event to officially welcome all students back to school. The goal of this event was to encourage socialization through fun activities, such as making bracelets, playing games, and painting.

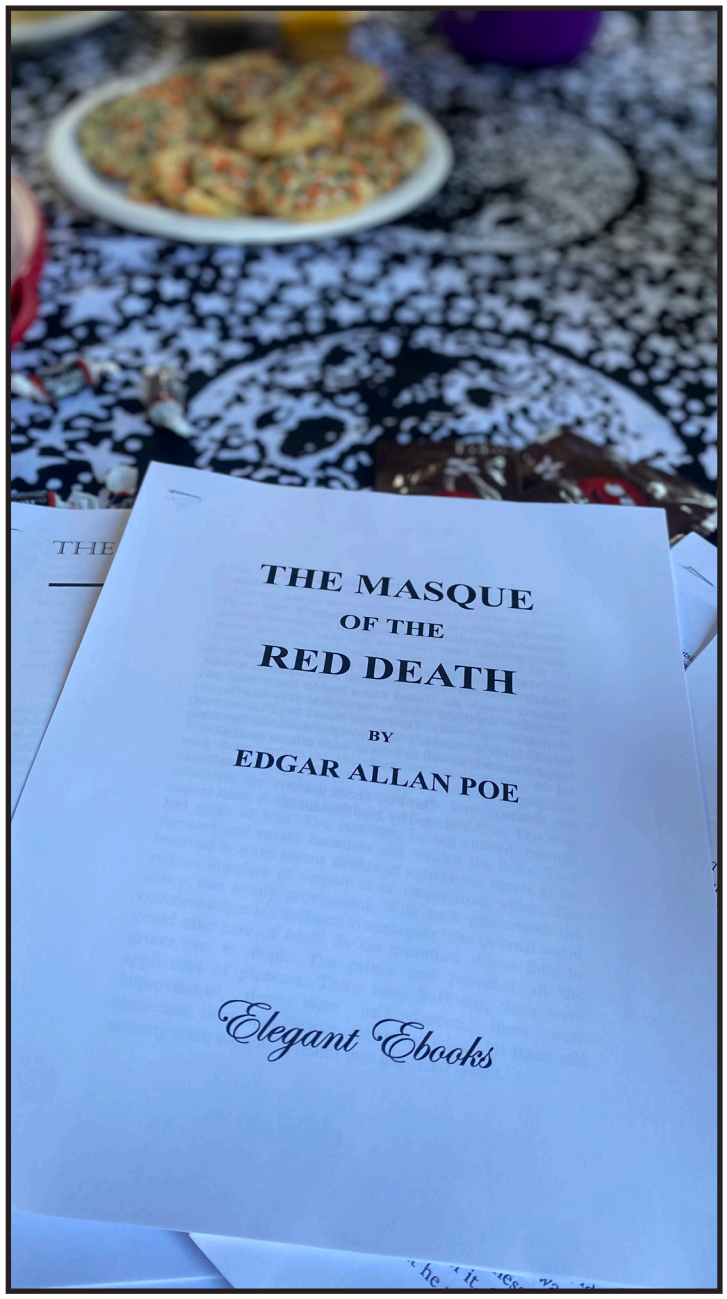
Cosplay Competition: On October 27, the KPOP and Anime Club hosted Saint Leo University's second annual Cosplay Competition, where students had the opportunity to showca their interests, creativity, and performance abilities.

Presidential Brunch and Alumni Awards: During Homecoming Weekend '22, 17 Saint Leo University alumni were honored during the annual Alumni Awards ceremony. Awards recogn alumni who excel professionally, live out the Benedictine Co Values, and serve the global community.

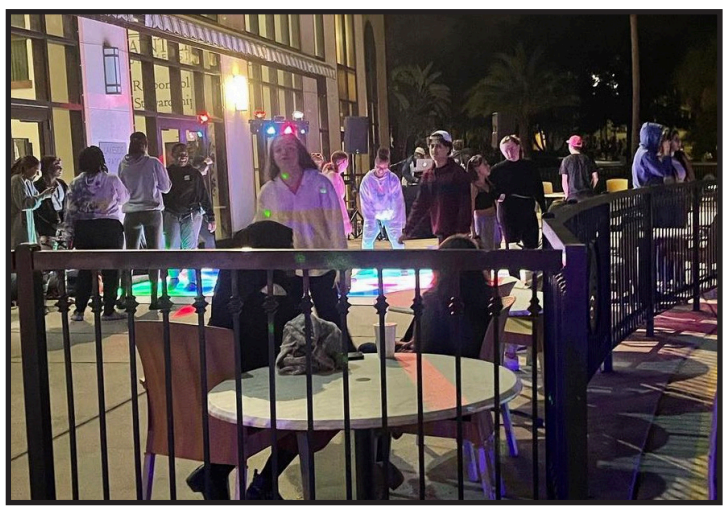


Mental Health Day: Saint Leo University partnered up with SheSpeaksSolutions, to bring a day of rest and relaxation for Saint Leo students. From yoga, messages, painting, and lots food, there was something for everyone.

STER DOWN!



Spooky Reading: On Halloween, Saint Leo's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta (International English Honors Society) got in this spirit by holding their annual "Spooky Reading," featuring original works from members as well as literary classics like Edgar Allen Poe.



Club Leo: After Saint Leo Student Activities had to postpone Club Leo due to weather, it was held on October 30. Students had a fun night with games such as jenga and hockey, dances, and music by the SCC patio.

Medical Humanities Welcome Back Party: Dr. Allyson Marino, Dr. Cheryl Kozina, and Dr. Karen Hannel hosted the medical humanities welcome back party on Oct. 6, after being postponed by Hurricane Ian. Students, regardless of major or grade, were invited to this event. It wasn't limited to just medical humanities—programs like philosophy, veteran's studies, and interdisciplinary studies were discussed.

Magic Kingdom Field Trip: As part of their syllabus, the HON360 Community and Identity: Psychology Disney, taught by Dr. Tammy Zachilli, professor of Psychology, went to Magic Kingdom on October 29. While observing people as part of their assignment, the students had a lot of fun and enjoyed the different rides.

Valiance in Vietnam: One veteran's story

Sophia Sullivan
Editorials Editor

Popp smiles in his dress uniform as he holds his fiancée on the night he left for Vietnam.

Imagine marching through jungles for months, unaware of what's on the other side, and unable to remove your boots for fear of swelling.

This was a reality for Donald Popp, formally a Specialist Fourth Class in the United States Army.

Popp grew up in Gary, Indiana with his father, mother, and three sisters. He attended Lew Wallace High School, where he first laid eyes upon his future fiancée, Cynthia Railing. Although he wasn't too interested in academics, Popp proved himself in other ways. He was always fascinated by auto mechanics and worked as a body shop apprentice after graduation.

In 1969, Popp received his draft at the age of eighteen. Because he was aware of the conflict in Vietnam, he was expecting to be conscripted. He was then sent to Missouri for eight weeks of bootcamp.

"Bootcamp was trying. And I learned a lot," stated Popp. Even in the face of the uncertain situation, Popp showed his willingness to better himself.

When his group arrived in Vietnam after bootcamp, they were greeted with a bombing. They hadn't even received their weapons yet, so the men were instructed to enter the bunkers until it was safe to come out. Afterward, the men were sent to tents and given their companies and job classifications.

"While I was there, they had flatbed semi-trucks full of wooden coffins, and I asked what those were, and a sergeant said, 'You're their replacements'," recalled Popp. It was a sobering thought for Popp, who would spend the next eleven months involved in the gruesome combat of Vietnam.

Shortly after his arrival, Popp was placed in the First Infantry Division and travelled right next to the Cambodian border. They were the first company to enter Cambodia, and the president ordered them to confiscate weapons, bicycles, and anything that the Viet Cong could use against the South Vietnamese and Americans.

During his time in Vietnam, Popp was seriously injured once. However, the injury left a lifelong remembrance.

"From weapons: that's how I injured my ear. I couldn't hear nothing out of my left ear. It was like a seashell," he recalled. "The medic took a piece of cigarette paper and wet it and took tweezers and put it way up on my eardrum to fuse the hole."

He never heard out of his ear the same way again. Popp also experienced jungle rot around his waist as a result of wading through rice paddies. Additionally, Agent Orange caused lasting effects for Popp, such as diabetes and a thyroid problem.

Despite these trials, Popp also remembers the better parts of his time in Vietnam, like bringing children candy in an orphanage, joining a softball league where he won the championship for his company, and visiting Saigon, where he called his fiancée.

"That's the only time I could ever call her," he reminisced with a wistful grim upon his features. Clearly, the thought of his love back home allowed him to continue fighting.

One night when Popp was on patrol, his dog began to act differently, and he saw something moving in the tall jungle grass. Popp shot into the brush without permission and discovered he had shot a young Viet Cong boy laden with grenades.

"His job," Popp said, "was to blow up our platoon."

He was immediately sent home with two Bronze Stars in hand for heroic achievement and selflessness for risking his life for the sake of his platoon. He seemed proud of his heroism, but a grave look remained as he remembered that day.

In March of 1971, he headed for the U.S. and landed in California. In the airport, the crowds harassed the soldiers, calling them "baby killers" and spitting on them. As many Vietnam veterans, Popp experienced difficulty reacclimating to "normal" life.

"It took me a year at least, maybe even longer," Popp explained. The fact that Popp knew he fought for this country and everyone's freedom brought him a sense of comfort, but he was concerned what society would think of him for being involved in the war.

"Knowing that my life would change helped me cope," said Popp.

After eleven months of solely communicating by letters, he finally reunited with his true love. Popp promptly returned to Indiana and married his fiancée on November 6, 1971. The couple eventually had two daughters, and five grandchildren.

Popp also returned to work six months after coming back from Vietnam. He began at a Chrysler dealership and worked at many other body shops before retiring from a successful career as a body shop manager.

Nearly a half a century after the war, Popp and one of his daughters partook in the Honor Flight, where he and other Vietnam veterans were given an exclusive tour of Washington D.C.

"It was one of the best days of my life," recalled Popp. "People in the airport were clapping at us, and it was the welcome I never got when I landed in California."

The veterans were whisked around the city as traffic stopped for them, were shown monument after monument, and enjoyed a first-class flight.

"They treated us like kings," Popp remarked.

While at the Vietnam Wall, Popp found the name of one of his close friends from his platoon whom he placed in a body bag on one of their last sweeps. That friend had let Popp borrow his camera while they were serving in Vietnam.

"That's something I'll never forget, and I still got his camera," he said.

Popp's experience in Vietnam shaped him into the person he is today. While many Vietnam veterans turned to drugs, mental illness, or suicide, Popp turned to his wife, daughters, and eventually his grandchildren for support. He took his horrendous circumstances and used them to become something so much more. And that is what the Vietnam War taught this country: that even in the face of uncertain times, it is vital that we support our soldiers.

Honoring Saint Leo veterans

Sarah Gilley
Copyeditor

Saint Leo honors all the veterans on campus by placing signs throughout campus about each veteran.

On Nov. 11, we all come together to honor and celebrate our veterans. Saint Leo University has a long military heritage, dating all the way back to 1973 when Saint Leo first recognized military personnel and their families as an important part of the student community. From here it only expanded, with Saint Leo being named one of largest committed educational providers to the U.S. military.

With this information in mind, The Lions' Pride Media Group wanted to shine light on a couple of veterans who call Saint Leo their home, as well as show our appreciation for all that they have done for us and our country.

Christopher Haley, a Marine veteran, and a sophomore majoring in biology enlightened us on what being a veteran means to him.

"Being a veteran to me means you have a unique perspective of America and the diverse people that make it what it is. It makes you appreciate democracy more, and helps you recognize just how fragile it is," Haley said.

After being out of the Marines for about a year now, Haley has decided to return to the Marine Corps through the reserve's program and continue to serve his country. On Veterans Day, Haley will be starting his journey in the reserves as well as celebrating the Marine Corps' 247th birthday on Nov. 10. He is excited to serve again, even if it is more of a limited capacity than being active duty.

Cole Washko, an Air Force veteran studying English with a specialization in professional writing, shared the story of why he joined the Air Force and the impact it had on him.

"I wanted to join the military to serve my country and learn new skills that would set me up to become a well-rounded individual. Also, I desired the memories and adventures that so many veterans have talked about before me," Washko said. "The most impactful memory I have from the military is when I was about to graduate from basic training, and we had a general speak to our flight, graduating class."

Washko continued, explaining how you should strive to leave the "military better than you found it" in hopes of also becoming a better person than you were before you joined. The general that spoke to Washko's graduating class finished his speech by giving a quote by Pope John XXIII, and this quote stuck with Washko, as he has it tattooed on his left forearm.

Veterans Day is a day to celebrate, honor, and thank those who have served in the armed forces as well as those who have been killed in the wars they so bravely fought in for our country.

If you know someone who is a veteran, make sure to thank them on not only Veterans Day, Nov. 11, but every day. Make sure to honor those who fought for our freedom as well as those who have died for us. God bless America!

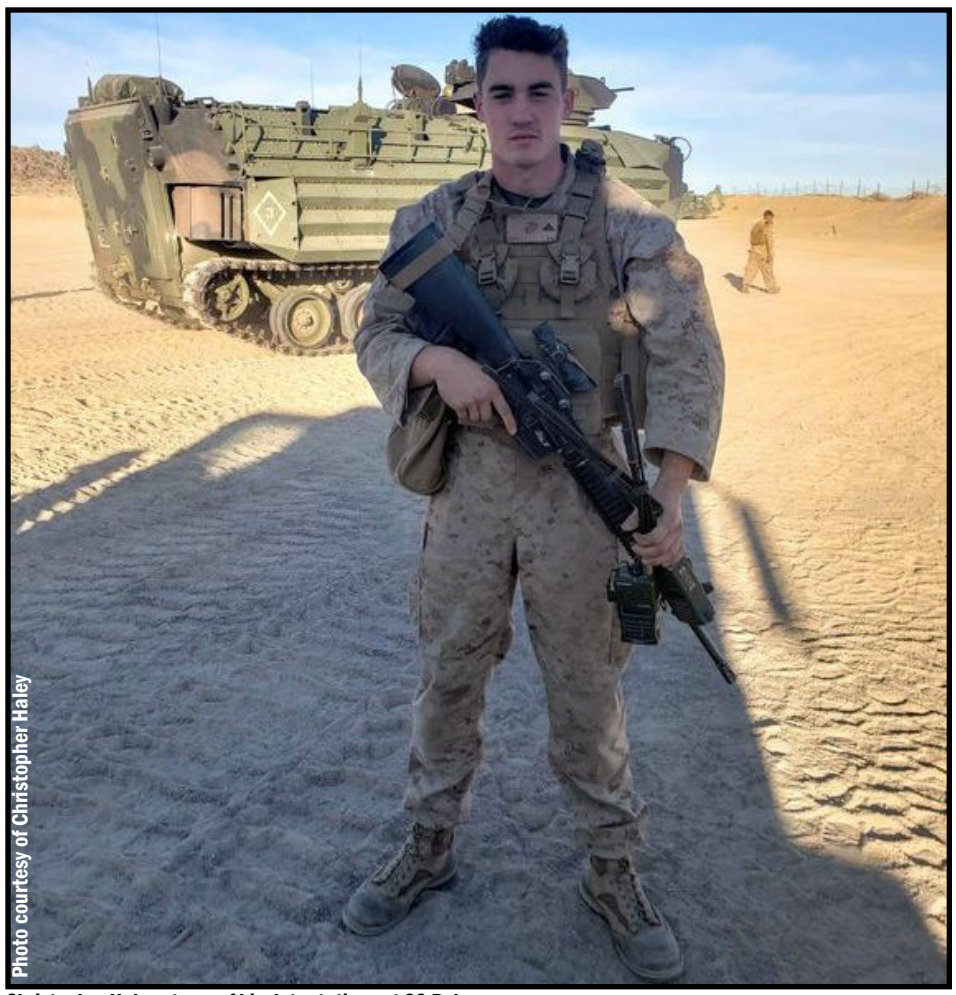


Photo courtesy of Christopher Haley
Christopher Haley at one of his duty stations at 29 Palms.

Photo courtesy of Cole Washko
Cole Washko on a camel in Saudi Arabia, taking a ride.

Iran's protests after the death of Mahsa Amini: Women's rights and police brutality

Myla Shashiki
World News Editor

On September 16, a 22-year-old woman named Zhina Amini, more well known by her Iranian name Mahsa Amini, died shortly after being detained by Iran's "morality police" in Tehran because of improper use of the hijab, the mandatory head covering that Iranian women are expected to wear.

The authorities have claimed that she possessed an underlying medical condition, which led her to have a sudden heart attack while she was under arrest.

"She suddenly lost consciousness and fell on the floor, that due to her chronological disease she could not adapt herself with the emerged conditions, and therefore, under such conditions, her heart pulse was disrupted, her blood pressure dropped, and after that she lost consciousness," explained the statement released by Iran's Legal Medicine Organization.

However, her family has denied these allegations, claiming that Amini was healthy. Several eyewitnesses, including other women who were detained with her, have stated that she was repeatedly beaten by the police.

"They are lying, she has not been to any hospital at all in the past 22 years, other than for a few cold-related sicknesses," said Amjad Amini, Mahsa's father, when interviewed by the BBC. "She never had any medical conditions, she never had surgery."

Additionally, photographs of Amini at the hospital show that she had bruises around the eyes and ear bleeding, symptoms that are more consistent with a head injury than with a heart attack, contradicting the authority's claims.

The anger and uproar caused by this situation have sparked a series of protests across Iran, which are being mainly led by teenage and young adult women, and with the violent response from the Basij, a militia group under Iran's Revolutionary Corps, catching widespread attention, especially after a series of testimonies and videos showing them beating and even sexually harassing protestors surfaced on the internet.

"They gave jobs to a lot of people that mentally do not have the education to fit into the Pasdaran," explained Dr. Marco Rimanelli, professor of political sciences and international studies at Saint Leo, about this paramilitary group. "You hear from a lot of women that they got harassed over years for any perceived indiscretions, because the point is no longer whether you do it right or wrong. Any of these Basiji might tell you, because they don't have a high education, that you did something wrong, and they are going to start checking on you and harassing you; it becomes a pretext."

According to the Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA), there were over 200 people killed at the protests as of October 10, with 29 percent of the victims being under the age of 18.

There seems to be a trend in recent years with younger generations of Iranians being more willing to voice counterrevolutionary opinions and protest because of an increased influence from the west due to the use of new technologies like social media and the internet.

Likewise, this is not the first instance of police brutality being directed toward the youth in Iran; a similar situation of violence was presented during the 2009 presidential elections protests.

"They beat up all the university students and high schoolers during this, and there was a major fight over internet access because they would use their phones to tell each other where to do the stuff," said Rimanelli. "They were crushed eventually, but they showed that they were willing to protest."

However, there is a remarkable difference between the current situation and what happened in 2009 when it comes to gender as, unlike in previous protests—which have been mostly male-dominated with women supporting them—it is women who are leading the movement.

Another important factor to consider is the fact that Amini was a Kurdish woman, which not only played a factor in the way that she was treated by the morality police, but has also now influenced the direction of the protests. Many Kurdish men decided to participate because of the undercurrent of secessionism that Amini's identity has brought to the cause, given that the Kurds have been strongly discriminated against in the past and have been fighting for several years to gain independence from Iran.

When it comes to international reactions, the European Union has frozen the assets of the leading officials of the Basij and Iran's Information Minister, and has banned them from traveling to Europe. The United States has also imposed economic sanctions upon the morality police, as well as senior military officers.

Nonetheless, it is unfortunately unlikely for this to make a significant change in the Iranian government's response, as they have dealt with similar sanctions in the past, to the point where they can brush these off.

Moreover, despite the sanctions, they feel a sense of protection coming from their military alliance with Russia, as well as from the pipelines that are being built which will allow them to trade with China.

"They think they can resist any sanctions; they are repressing at home what they need to repress, and they need the support from only two places: Russia, which covers them also with Syria, and China," said Rimanelli. "If the money and the petrol goes via Russia and China, they can survive and they can repress everybody."

Currently, 227 members of the Parliament have requested for people arrested during the protests to receive the death penalty, with eight people having already been charged as of October 29 according to UN News.

Because of this, the best thing we can do on our behalf to contribute to this cause is to keep spreading information on the subject, to ensure that the voices and opinions of women and Iranian citizens in general continue to be heard.

Women at these marches have started burning their head coverings and even cutting their hair as a sign of protest.

Athletes on Air: Elena Verticchio – Women's Golf

Pia Perthen
Sports Editor

Spectators might have noticed a Women's Golfer representing the Green and Gold hitting a small white ball precisely across the golf course at Lake Jovita, about five minutes away from Saint Leo University's University Campus.

This talented golf player is Elena Verticchio—from Rome, Italy—who is currently enrolled as a master's in business administration (MBA) student here at Saint Leo. Verticchio finished her undergraduate in marketing and a minor in leadership studies at the University of Maryland, where she also played four years for the women's golf team.

"I always knew I wanted to be a business major because it gives you the knowledge and skills employers want and translates across many roles and industries," said Verticchio. "Through minoring in leadership, I became a very open-minded person and a better leader. I always try to bring out the best abilities in my teammates and motivate them to work together towards a shared goal."

From her past experiences, Verticchio has developed the motto "actions speak louder than words," and she believes that people's actions show their real attitudes and beliefs, rather than what they say.

"I love this motto because it keeps me motivated in school, at practice, and in life in general," Verticchio said.

Verticchio works hard almost every week on the golf course for one to five hours of qualitative practice. Additionally, she tries to include two to three workouts each week to stay in shape and prepare for 36-hole-day tournament events.

Practice makes perfect, and it helped that Verticchio started playing golf at nine years old and that she grew up in a supportive environment, as her mom is a golf swing coach.

"My brother would play soccer with the other children while I started hitting balls on the range," said Verticchio. "When I was ten years old, I got my first Cobra set of golf clubs and it is safe to say that I was the happiest kid in the world."

Verticchio proved her solid golf skills at her first college tournament playing for the Saint Leo Women's Golf team, where she shot an impressive eight-under-par in three rounds at the DBU women's classics in Denton, Texas in September. As a team, the Lions placed third in a strong field with 16 teams.

Photo courtesy of Saint Leo Athletics

Verticchio is always well-prepared and figures out the best strategies to score low.

"Going into the last round, I was fighting for the title," said Verticchio. "It was a great tournament because I had so much fun with my teammates and Coach Greenwood and, even if my golf game was not the best, I was still able to shoot under par every round."

Not only on the golf course but off the golf course, Verticchio's mom plays a crucial role in her life. When asked for Verticchio's biggest idol, she had no hesitation and named her mom right away. She has taught Verticchio many vital life lessons and has supported her in achieving accomplishments in life.

"My mother has taught me that nothing is impossible and has helped me overcome hard times in my life," Verticchio said. "She is such an inspiration to me, and she sets high standards for the whole family."

Even though it is only Verticchio's first semester here at Saint Leo, she was able to form core memories and found her love for golf again due to the amazing practice facilities and her teammates, including Coach Lyndsey Bevill. The golf experience at Maryland and the great opportunities at Saint Leo will, among other factors, contribute to fulfilling Verticchio's biggest goal of becoming a professional golfer and playing on the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) tour.

"Every day, I feel so happy and excited to practice and be with my coach and teammates," said Verticchio.

She named playing the Saint Leo Invitational home tournament as her best memory at Saint Leo so far.

"We had so many people from Saint Leo volunteering and cheering for the team; it made me feel at home," said Verticchio. "I had a great time with Coach Bevill and my teammates on and off the course."

Apart from being a student-athlete, the graduate student enjoys painting, traveling, and exploring to get to know new people, places, and cultures.

"I am lucky because I traveled a lot because of golf tournaments. I have been to 18 countries, and I plan to visit more during the summer," said Verticchio.

Verticchio's advice for all college students is to maintain good time management, which will be the key to success while still getting the most out of the college experience. Consequently, she tries to make a schedule for the week to ensure enough time to rest and relax. Not only does Verticchio have the expertise to hit the little white golf ball in the hole, but she also knows how to keep the balance of her busy student-athlete life.

"College is all about the experiences and the connections that you build. I advise everyone to enjoy and treasure every day you have as student-athletes because it goes by so fast. Also, do not forget to listen to your body and take care of your mental health," Verticchio said, rounding up an amazing interview with an intellectual and athletic young woman with great chances to achieve success in life.

Photo courtesy of Saint Leo Athletics

Representing the Lions in green and gold colors, Verticchio gave her best at the Saint Leo Invitational.

Introducing new majors to Saint Leo University

Isa Riaño
Advertisement Manager

Every year, various colleges at Saint Leo University work to improve. This academic year, the College of Arts and Sciences' goal is to introduce new majors and minors to students. Continue reading to find out what these new programs have to offer.

International studies is a new major that can also be pursued as a minor. The College of Arts and Sciences offers this degree.

Working on bringing this major to campus, according to Dr. Daniel DuBois, assistant professor of history, was a learning experience.

"Not everything I originally envisioned or desired ended up becoming part of the program, but what I had to cut out or rethink was thanks to the great advice I received from students, faculty, staff, and administrators," said DuBois.

This major is ideal for students who want to learn about other countries and make a difference in the international community.

"The goal of the international studies major and minor is to provide exciting learning opportunities and rigorous career preparation for students who care about global events and want to make a difference in government, law, nonprofits, academia, and the private sector," said DuBois.

Religious studies is another new major and minor in the College of Arts and Sciences available to students.

After the religion major was discontinued at Saint Leo, faculty wanted to introduce this major to take its place.

"The hope is that students who are interested in religion or theology, particularly in conversation with other disciplines, will have the opportunity to explore that," said Dr. Stephen Okey, an associate professor of religion at Saint Leo.

According to Okey, the most difficult aspect of introducing new majors is trying to spread the word about them and motivate students to join.

According to Saint Leo's faculty, the new majors that have been introduced are meant to enhance student experience inside and outside the classroom.

"Working on course development and determining what is most important for students to learn has been a lot of fun," Okey said.

Some new majors have not yet been introduced, but faculty from various departments are working hard to bring them to campus next semester. Music is one of these majors, and it is already available as a minor in the College of Arts and Sciences.

"The new bachelor's in music is due to be launched next year," said Dr. Cynthia Selph, assistant professor of music.

Selph is overjoyed that this major is coming to campus, as Saint Leo is a liberal arts institution.

"I am particularly pleased that the new bachelor's in music will prepare students for rewarding careers in music education, performing arts, or commercial music," said Selph.

Working on this major has required some time and dedication with qualified musicians who are eager to guide students pursuing a degree in music.

"We have created a curriculum that is both rigorous and practical, allowing students to select courses that are directly related to their chosen career path," Selph said.

Interdisciplinary studies is another major that will be available on campus soon.

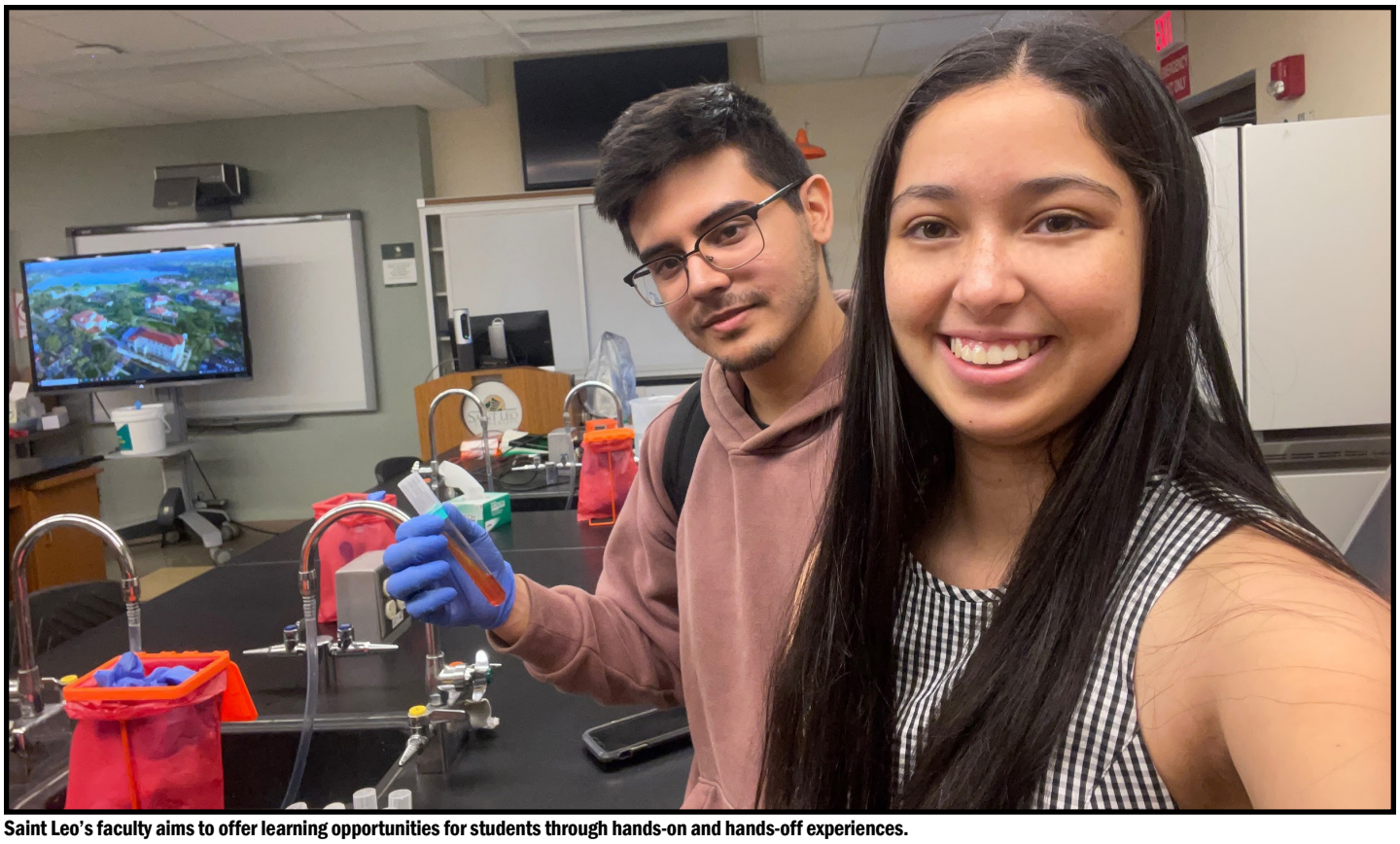
"We do not have a bachelor's degree in interdisciplinary studies yet," said Dr. Karen Hannel, chair of the department of interdisciplinary studies.

The goal of this major is for students to be able to study various fields of interest.

"Our programs are very versatile," Hannel said.

Lions can look forward to new learning opportunities on campus with all of the new majors and minors that have been introduced, as well as those that will be introduced in the future.

Photos by Isa Riaño.



Saint Leo's faculty aims to offer learning opportunities for students through hands-on and hands-off experiences.

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